

Know your Farmer, Know your Food



One of the things that most people have a common interest in is the love of quality, great tasting food. However, in today's society consumers are primarily disconnected with the sources of the food they eat. The modern grocery store is a Mecca of national and international diversity with produce and food stuffs from all across the world. Large scale farming and global marketing has created a disconnection between producers and consumers.

Know your Farmer, Know your Food is a USDA initiative with the mission to “strengthen the critical connection between farmers and consumers and supports local and regional food systems.” The objectives of this initiative include:

- Stimulate food- and agriculturally-based community economic development;
- Foster new opportunities for farmers and ranchers;
- Promote locally and regionally produced and processed foods;
- Cultivate healthy eating habits and educated, empowered consumers;
- Expand access to affordable fresh and local food; and
- Demonstrate the connection between food, agriculture, community and the environment.

At local levels producers and consumers alike have a lot to gain from one another. The local marketplace allows consumers to obtain a quality product directly from the hands that grew it. Small landowners and producers have the opportunity to market farm goods which otherwise could never make it to the greater marketplace. Coffee County, Tennessee producer, Ray Weaver, affirms that the community marketplace is the driving force for the distribution of the seventeen acres of sweet corn he grows annually; “we sell 85% of our corn at local farmers markets.” Mr. Weaver also noted that he is able to get more value for his product at farmers markets, and that the local marketplace is a valuable key to the connection between farmers and consumers.

Trends today show us that there is a growing demand and use of local farmers markets. With such a diversity of high quality products for reasonable prices, it only makes sense consumers are realizing the value of locally grown products. In the last 15 years the number of farmers markets has tripled, and now numbers over 7,175 nationwide. The Pick Tennessee Products website has over 100 farmers market locations listed with one or more in at least 60 Tennessee counties. So, the next time you make out your grocery list or get a craving for fresh produce, remember to check out your local marketplace or find out about producers near you; you might just be happily surprised.

To find out more about locally grown products and to find a marketplace or producer near you, visit the following websites or contact your local extension office, USDA service center, or local government office.



Know your Farmer, Know you Food website

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=KNOWYOURFARMER>



Pick Tennessee Products website

<http://www.picktnproducts.org/index.html>



USDA Agriculture Marketing Service website

<http://search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/>



The University of Tennessee Extension Service website

<http://utextension.tennessee.edu>